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ABSTRACT

The study was designed to determine the effect of T-group experience on an individual's perceived level of personal functioning. An experimental group of eight counselor trainees, who received a T-group experience for an academic quarter, was compared with a control group of eight students, comparable in age and experience who were enrolled in a university extension class in psychology of personality. Pre and post measures of personal functioning were obtained using a self-anchoring scale. The mean gain scores showed a statistically significant difference in favor of the experimental group. Results indicate that (1) a T-group with personal growth orientation seems to have a positive impact on the personal functioning of participants, and (2) traditional methods of instruction do not appear to have any positive effect on students' level of personal functioning. References are included. (Author/SES)

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THE EFFECT OF T-GROUP EXPERIENCE ON PARTICIPANT'S LEVEL OF PERSONAL FUNCTIONING

A paper presented at the APGA Regional Convention held at St. Louis in April 1973.

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THE EFFECT OF T-GROUP EXPERIENCE ON THE PARTICIPANT'S LEVEL OF PERSONAL FUNCTIONING

One of the important variables in the interaction between counselor and client is the counselor's level of personal functioning. It has been amply demonstrated that counselors at higher levels of personal functioning are able to provide the client with certain necessary conditions of therapeutic change, such as empathy, unconditional regard, congruence, specificity of communication, confrontation and interpretations of immediacy (Rogers, 1957; Truax and Carkhuff, 1967; Carkhuff, 1969).

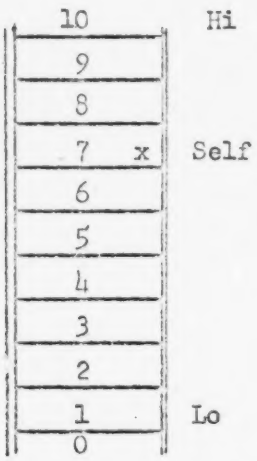
Many counselor education programs have recently added small group experiences, variously described as sensitivity training, T-groups, encounter groups with the implicit objective of raising the level of personal functioning of trainees (Foreman, 1967; Hurst and Jensen, 1968; Reddy, 1970). Studies to evaluate the effects of such experience on the trainees have been typically based on survey methods using self report instruments, and have produced very similar results: about 60% of the participants report strong satisfaction and feel they have been helped; 20-30% express mild satisfaction; and about 10% feel negatively with the group experience (Eddy and Lubin, 1971). Experimental studies of the effect of group procedures on the participants personal growth are rare. A carefully designed recent study has reported modest positive impact (Lieberman et al 1972).

Purpose: The current study was designed to determine the effect of T-group experience on the participant's perceived level of personal functioning.

Subjects: The study involved 16 subjects. Eight Ss were from the counselor education program at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. They constituted the experimental group (Es). A control group (Cs) of 8 Ss was formed from volunteers from a university extension course in Psychology of Personality taught in traditional manner. The groups were comparable in age and educational background.

Procedure: Prior to beginning of the treatment for Es, namely, T-group experience, both Es and Cs were asked to estimate their level of personal functioning using a self-anchoring scale (Kilpatrick and Cantril, 1960). Ss were asked to imagine the highest level of personal functioning and represent

that point by the highest rung of a ten step ladder like figure as shown below.



Next they were asked to imagine the lowest level of personal functioning and represent that point by the lowest rung of the ladder. Then, with reference to these two points, they were asked to indicate their current level of personal functioning.

Following this, Es spent 2 hours every week in a T-group for one academic quarter. The group was co-led by two members of the counselor-education faculty. The leaders had a definite personal growth orientation and adhered generally to the procedural format of NTL-personal growth-style T-group as described elsewhere (Schein and Bennis, 1965). At the conclusion of the T-group experience for the Es, both Es and Cs were again asked to indicate their level of personal functioning on a self-anchoring scale. A gain score was obtained for each subject. The significance of the difference between the mean gain socres of Es and Cs was tested by means of a T-test.

Results: Results are summarized in Table 1. A statistically significant difference was found between the mean gain score of Es as compared with Cs in favor of the Es.

Conclusion: 1. A T-group with personal growth orientation seems to have a positive impact on the personal functioning of participants.

2. Traditional methods of instruction do not appear to have any positive effect on students level of personal functioning.

TABLE 1

Gain Scores, Means, Standard Deviations and T-ratio for Experimental and Control Groups.

	Gain Scores	
	Es	Cs
	-1	0
	+2	0
	+1	0
	+2	1
	-1	-1
	0	-1
	+3	-1
	+3	-1
Means	1.25	-.375
S.D.	1.70	.79

t (14 d.f.) = 2.25*

*$p < .05$ (two tailed test)

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